

Linda Clair
Meditation Retreat
Kallara Conference Centre, Australia – March 2020
Transcription from Audio Recordings

File 3B – Monday morning discussion

Linda: Are you alright?

Question: I felt very quiet after being upset, nicely quiet. This morning's sit was very different. I ended up feeling that I was without me for a while, without the constriction somehow. I felt that the big constriction of me was not there, and I just cried with relief. It was really lovely to not feel so wound in a way that I wasn't even aware that I'm wound. And that has slowly come back over the rest of the morning, that me-ness. It's funny to describe it. But being without "me" – not hugely but enough to see how strong "me" is – was really good.

Linda: So that's one of the things that keeps you going. When you have a little taste of relative freedom – and it's relative because the me, to a degree, came back again. But when you see that it *is* possible – and each time that happens you understand it, not intellectually, but you see what's happening a bit more clearly – then that gives you the impetus and the confidence to keep going. "Maybe this is possible."

We keep talking about how much is involved, and that you can't help but underestimate the whole thing. Because it's you trying to project how it's going to be, and if you're doing it with your mind it's just impossible to know how it's going to be, because it's something that you have never ever felt before. So how can you know how it's going to be? But when you get a little sliver of how it maybe could be, that gives you – hope's not the right word, it's not about hope. If you keep hoping it's never going to happen; you have to actually do it, just keep doing it.

So when that happens don't try and hang on to it. Don't be scared it's going to go away because it won't. It hasn't gone away. It's still there. You just uncovered something for a while.

Question: It's as if I know it but I'm not in it. From this morning there's something known but I'm not inhabiting it.

Linda: It's realised I'd say, rather than known. But there's still work to do. And when you have a taste then you're more prepared to do the work because a lot of it is effort, work, coming back. But you do get rewarded. You do have times when you feel incredible.

Question: The session that we just had has been completely mental. It's the proverbial back to square one, but I understand it's not. So it's okay.

Linda: Yes, it's not. And you know it's partly tiredness because when you do have a bit of a release it takes a lot of energy, and partly the mind going, "I'll show you. You think you're getting somewhere." So you need to see that and just keep going. Don't be pulled down by it again. I think what I was trying to say before is, you can't help but underestimate the work that's involved and what's involved in getting there. But it also means you underestimate how amazing it is when you do realise and how different it is from anything you've ever experienced.

Question: Well, this morning was different. I understand it was a tiny sliver but the difference was I didn't want to move.

Linda: You sat through. You were sitting for quite a while.

Question: I didn't want to get up. I just wanted to be here. And the sun was coming up. It was deeply beautiful. But I wasn't in any ecstasy.

Linda: Ecstasy is so overrated! What people describe as ecstasy is just a reaction to a lack of suffering; it's that initial reaction. It's like when you're in pain and it goes away and you go, "Oh, that's amazing!" But after a while it just becomes normal. So it's just that initial reaction. But like you said, it's something much deeper than that that, much more beautiful, where you don't need to feel anything.

You think you want and need to feel to ecstasy – you don't. You don't need to feel anything. It's so ordinary. It's the ordinariness of it that's so amazing, where there's not this desire to have to feel anything in particular.

Question: There was no content somehow. You've said it before – it's an absence – and that's how it seemed.

Linda: And the absence becomes so beautiful. Whereas you do think it is going to be presence of something else, something's going to happen, and waiting for these incredibly deep experiences. But it's the absence, and being able to cope with that absence because initially there'll be reactions, "Ah, this is boring. It's not exciting." But once you can get through that and you can really cope with that absence and accept it, then you start to get a glimmer of what it's about.

Question: I could sense that it would be really different to be in that absence. There wasn't anything saying, "Wrong, wrong, wrong. I want something noisier."

Linda: Good. Very good. Often before something like that, in my experience, I used to have a period where I'd feel incredibly emotional and I'd go, "What's going on? I just feel so emotional." I'd keep going and then it was often a prelude to something amazing. So it's that initial – your mind going crazy and sensing what's going on and what's going to happen and just trying to put you off.

Question: It's extraordinary how upset I can get. (Laughing) So yes, I recognize that now. And I still feel very different. I feel like my body's crying in a peculiar way. My body wanted to cry but with relief. So it's not upset anymore but it's still quite liquid feeling.

Linda: Good. Really good.

Question: Thanks Linda...

Linda: So keep sitting, whatever. That emotion will probably come up again sometime but when you do see that – it's not so much a pattern, it's how the mind works, that desperation – you'll know to just sit through it. It won't have so much power.

In that retreat that I talk about where it really happened, I did have that emotional thing before. But rather than bringing me down, suddenly there was this incredible energy, because I could see through it and it gave me that push, "Ok, there's no way I'm going to put up with this anymore." So that gradually happens where it gives you more incentive and more energy. And it's your

intelligence that takes over. Gradually, gradually your real intelligence takes over from the intellect, the pure intelligence of the body, the brain, *this*.

Linda: Everyone's been very quiet this retreat.

Question: When I'm at home and sitting regularly, like an hour a day, or whatever I can manage, I find that I really look forward to meditating and when I sit down to meditate I relax into it and I can often go quite deep into stillness quite quickly. I was thinking it will be great – seven days of meditation – I'll just sink right into it and it will be wonderful. Of course it's not. It's painful and irritating. The first couple of meditations of the day are always the best. Then as I go, instead of enjoying meditating and having a calm mind, throughout the day my mind is becoming more active rather than less active. And I have to keep forcibly bringing myself back to the breath or to counting. I'm just amazed at all the inane rubbish. It's not even interesting thoughts. It's just my mind generating crazy little loops that I get stuck in. And through the day it becomes more like that rather than being calmer, and more than normal in my normal daily life than meditation. Is that a normal thing?

Linda: Yes, and it's one of the reasons that you come to a retreat.

You can come with the expectation that you're going to go more deeply into it and you are, but a degree of calmness is no measure of how deeply into it you are. When you get into the deeper levels of the mind it's going to start to come up. They are levels that you might not be touching when you're at home sitting where you're in your home environment, comfortable, with nothing really challenging you so much.

So then you come into an environment like this where there's a huge group of mature mediators and you're sitting for long periods, it's really going to start to stir up the muck at the bottom of the pond. So that's what happens and that's why you start to feel it more as the day goes on because you're going into the depths of the mind.

Question: It's funny; it's counter intuitive. I'm going deeper but it feels like I'm actually shallower.

Linda: Yes, it feels like your shallower but you're deeper. And often, those periods where you feel calm and still are just the top layer. People can often keep it like that because they don't get challenged and you can get quite attached to that layer of stillness because it does feel really good. And there's a resistance to going down and seeing what else there is.

And then there's the thing when the mind is stirred up, "I'm not doing this properly. I shouldn't be feeling like this. It means I'm not working properly. I'm not making that effort. I'd rather be feeling that stillness," but that's actually the surface layer – not always – but at times it can be.

It's not like you're not going to feel deeply still when you get down. And as you go through those layers you're going to feel a much deeper level of stillness; there are different levels. You're feeling disturbed because you are going more deeply into it and it's a normal thing.

It puts a lot of people off because they start off feeling, "Ah, this is great," and then they get into a more challenging situation and it doesn't seem to great anymore so you think you're doing something wrong.

So allow yourself to be disturbed. Everything needs to come up. And you need to be disturbed. Everything needs to be disturbed before it all clears out. So you're throwing out the rubbish. But

you have to see the rubbish. You can't turn away and pretend it's not there. It's there. You need to actually see it and acknowledge it's there in you and that it's a big part of you, or who you think you are – not the real you. And then just keep going. It doesn't matter what you're thinking about it.

That stuff that comes up is also a way of getting you to react and surprise you. It's like this element of surprise, "Ah, I haven't thought about that in years. It doesn't seem to be related to anything." And it's not but it's a way of getting you and making you react to it. And that reaction is perpetuating it and taking you more deeply into another train of thought.

You need to see the thought but also your reaction to it at the same time because it's your reaction to it that feeds it and keeps it going; not so much the thought. The thought only keeps going because you're reacting to it, no matter what it is. It doesn't matter what it is.

Question: I think there's plenty there so I'm sure I'll get a lot of practice.

Linda: Yes, so just see it. You see it and come back. And it will take a huge effort to come back and you'll also get tired too. That's another reason that can happen toward the end of the day because you do get a bit more tired and it's harder to see stuff but also harder to repress stuff and you're just more tired so everything starts to come up.

Question: That's comforting. At least I'm on the right track.

Linda: Yes, you're on the right track, definitely. It doesn't mean you have to feel disturbed all the time. And enjoy it when you're not feeling that; when you're feeling still. But be very careful you don't get too attached to that stillness. You can become attached to anything. So allow things to arise. Anything that comes up needs to come up – it really does. And I'm sure you're not the only one feeling that. But it is why you come to something like this; to really get into the nitty gritty of it and challenge you.

Question: When you said this morning – I know you've said it many times but – I really heard it when you said, you're looking for the source of the desire to think – not just see the thoughts, but the desire. I look but I can't catch it. It's like the desire to think is a desire not to be here. It's a desire to keep this story going, keep this story going. It's like riding a bike because if you don't keep riding it, you fall off. So it's like that?

Linda: Yes. Don't look for the desire. You won't realise what the desire to think is until you get to it. More watch than look. Watch everything. Watch what's happening. So yes, the desire to think is, like you said, a fear of being here. You're too scared to actually be here. So the desire to think comes from fear.

If we just try and stop thinking, it's like a band aid, you're not really getting down to the source of thinking. In some practices you can get into states where you stop thinking but it's just a surface thing. There's still fear there because you're scared to start thinking again. You think that if it comes in it's going to disturb you. But this is really much deeper.

So yes, the desire to think is really the fear of being here.

Question: I am starting to see that. I feel quite spacious sometimes and then I feel tension creeping in and then thought starts.

Linda: That spacious state takes a lot of energy. Not thinking takes much more energy – a different kind of energy to thinking. Thinking wastes energy. You're just using energy all the time. It's one of the reasons that people need to sleep so much; to get over thinking all day. But not thinking is generating energy. The energy is generating around your body all the time. Thinking does not come into it and pull down the energy and slow that energy down. Thinking is like a drag on that pure energy that is the natural state that's incredibly, incredibly fast.

So thinking is very heavy, slow energy that's just sucking it from you all the time and not replenishing it. But when you don't think, it's a completely different form of energy; incredibly fast but regenerating all the time because there is no time.

So thinking appears to be so fast that you've got no hope of catching it. But as your body starts to purify of your personal past, thinking, the past, the fear, it frees up energy in the body gradually, gradually. But you can only take very small amounts of it at a time until you get a bit more used to it.

Question: The meditation has like a cumulative effect as you go on?

Linda: Yes, as you go on. And the times, as R. was saying, when the mind is really active and coming back, it's actually freeing you. If you can keep coming back to your body, you're quickening your consciousness. Rather than being dragged down into that habitual thinking state, you go, "No, I'll come back and be in my body," and intelligence starts to take over.

Intelligence is what's brought you here. It's not rational. When you look at rationally, who'd want to be sitting here for a week in pain, boredom, whatever, doing this. But it's your pure intelligence that wants to become free from the mind.

But it needs to happen gradually because you can't take too much at once. It's just too much for your body/psyche to take all at once.

So everyone here is gradually becoming more enlightened.

Question: No one is left out.

Linda: No, if you want this more than anything, that's what you get. And you won't be disappointed.